



The Voice of Retailing

Connecticut Retail Merchants Association
129 Church Street, suite 315
New Haven, Ct 06510
Phone (860) 527-1044
Fax (860) 493-7476
Website: www.crmaonline.com

**Testimony by Tim Phelan, President, Connecticut Retail Merchants Association
General Law Committee February 28, 2019**

Members of the General Law Committee, thank you very much for the opportunity to submit testimony for your consideration on Proposed Senate Bill 467, AN ACT STREAMLINING THE LIQUOR CONTROL ACT.

My name is Tim Phelan, and I am president of the Connecticut Retail Merchants Association, representing retail businesses all across our state. I appreciate your interest in a strong, vibrant and thriving retail community – it is an interest that we share, along with the people of our great state.

Overall, retailers in our state support more than 470,000 jobs and contribute more than \$34 billion to the state's economy. There are roughly 42,000 retail establishments in Connecticut, and in total, the retail industry produces approximately 14 percent of Connecticut's total GDP. As much as any other industry, retail is the lifeblood of commerce in Connecticut, indispensable to our economy and our quality of life.

Brick and mortar retail has gone through a transformation in recent years, as technology has completely changed how consumers shop. It's crucial that retailers evolve and change to respond to these new times, and it's important that the state of Connecticut is supportive of these businesses too. Retailers are continuing to find new products to sell to customers, to continue to encourage them to spend their hard-earned money here in Connecticut.

One such change that we are hopeful this committee will support is allowing for retailers that have large grocery offerings be allowed to sell the full scope of products that traditional grocery stores can sell—including beer. More and more, families across the state are relying on retailers like Target and Wal-Mart as their one convenient stop for all of their items. In the spirit of this, we hope this committee will support the provisions of Proposed Senate Bill 467 that allow for stores like these to be defined as a grocery store under Connecticut law and to start selling beer, just as their grocery peers do. It's a matter of fairness across the retail sector.

Providing new retail outlets for beer in Connecticut will also help support the state's thriving craft beer industry. In other states, these retailers feature local craft beers in addition to national brands we all know and love. By providing new ways to get their locally made products to Connecticut consumers, this will be helping the craft beer industry to grow their customer base.

Retailers like Target and Wal-Mart currently sell adult beverages in the vast majority of states. It would be a shame to have this be yet another area of law in which Connecticut is arbitrarily out of step with our neighbors in the Northeast and across the country.

I hope you will support Proposed Senate Bill 467 and give consumers more choices for purchasing beer, while supporting retail in Connecticut.

Thank you for your consideration.